

December 2018

# EASTERN SOMALILAND PROTECTION BRIEFING NOTE

The intense and persistent drought beginning in 2016 has devastated Somaliland, wiping out millions of livestock, the key to rural livelihoods, and displacing over 700,000 people. As 2018 comes to a close, hundreds of thousands of people remain displaced, precariously surviving. Recovery remains elusive, as drought conditions continue and people lack the resources to rebuild livelihoods. Protracted displacement amplifies protection risks, as competition for resources increases, and other tensions grow, such as amongst clans, and between hosts and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Women and children face the most acute risks. This briefing note draws attention to some of the main protection and gender concerns for displaced people in Somaliland in specific connection with the drought, and calls for comprehensive and sustained action by all stakeholders to address the highlighted concerns.

## PRIMARY PROTECTION RISKS

**“The tension is because people in the host community are unregistered for assistance. The tension can cause violence,”**  
explains a woman in Sanaag.

**Clan Conflict:** three clans are most prevalent in Sool and Sanaag, yet the drought and resulting displacement has pushed many other clans into these regions, resulting in heightened inter-clan tensions that on occasions erupt into violent conflict. Cycles of revenge killings can then protract the violence. Heightened tensions can also reduce mobility and thus livelihood opportunities and even basic survival, such as by limiting water access.

**Rape:** the majority of women reported rape as a threat, exacerbated by the drought, particularly due to travelling increased distances to collect firewood and water, responsibilities that overwhelmingly women and children shoulder. Clans can offer protection, but when IDPs and hosts, or different clans, are in close proximity, risks increase.

**Forced Evictions:** forced eviction was not observed during the research period, but was reported as a major concern. This included reports of active land disputes that are likely to result in IDP evictions. As displacement becomes protracted and tensions increase, the likelihood of forced eviction also increases, particularly in urban areas and locations with shared resources between hosts and IDPs.



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**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):** both women and men reported increased VAWG, yet responses were muted about domestic violence. Forced marriage of women and girls was also reported and a major concern. Female genital mutilation (FGM) featured in discussions with women, and according to secondary data, remains highly prevalent.

**Other Protection Risks:** unexploded ordinance, land mines, uncovered birkhads (communal water sources) and animal attacks, primarily hyenas, were also reported as protection concerns, but featured less prominently in discussions and the household survey.

## PRIMARY GENDER EQUITY ISSUES

**“For issues such as rape, if it happens, people will bring livestock to try to solve the issue, as compensation... Men solving issues with livestock is not a solution. We must have justice and arrests,”**

explains a woman in Kra Sherka.

### WOMEN: INVOLUNTARY SUPERHEROES

The drought has dramatically increased already enormous workloads for women. Women are typically responsible for most household chores, such as childcare, cooking and water collection. The latter has become increasingly difficult, due to water scarcity, while women now find themselves often the main breadwinner, collecting wood or engaging in casual labour for meagre income. Bereft of livestock, men are reluctant to adapt to new livelihoods, or are migrating for income, leaving women as the household head.

### CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS

As men are increasingly away from home and/or women take on more livelihood responsibilities, women find themselves more in control of household decision-making and resources. However, when men are still at home or when they return, this can be a key source of tension, as it usurps typical gender roles, where men, having lost their traditional role, find their authority further under threat. This is also linked to increasing risks of VAWG. At the community level, men remain dominant decision makers and authorities.





## **INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND RIGHTS**

Women consistently reported a lack of understanding and ability to assert their rights, from the household level to broader society. This exacerbates gender inequity, as women reported being unable to access judicial services to deal with forced marriage, rape and FGM, thus reducing the deterrent effect. Instead, religious leaders and clan elders, all of whom are men, are the primary authorities for dealing with issues, thus posing difficulties for women's ability to access justice and services.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ALL ACTORS**

- Prioritise addressing gender inequities and protection risks, particularly relating to core issues of water access, livelihoods and access to justice for women;
- Ensure that all interventions are geared towards meaningful participation of women in leadership and community decision making and management, going beyond token membership;
- Utilise the changing gender roles to sensitively encourage more equitable gender roles and women's empowerment, including targeted capacity development for women, such as in leadership skills;
- Tailor protection interventions towards the specifics of individual communities, such as water access or shelter, according to community needs. Improved protection understanding is critical in all areas; and
- 'Menstream' gender by identifying and cultivating men gender champions, including religious leaders and clan elders, to take leadership roles in engaging other men on women's rights.

### **GOVERNMENT OF SOMALILAND**

- Take action to minimise forced evictions and where they do occur, provide tailored support to evictees;

- Push for effective sector coordination to ensure protection and gender issues are integrated across all humanitarian response sectors;
- Increase efforts to ensure equitable access to services and justice for women and children, particularly in rural and remote areas; and
- Disseminate and apply Somaliland's IDP policy at regional and district levels, sensitising both authorities and IDPs.

## DONORS

- Demand all humanitarian response activities have clearly defined and well thought out gender and protection components;
- Earmark funding specifically to address gender and protection issues, both as standalone and mainstreamed initiatives; and
- Sustain funding for Somaliland to address the distinct lack of recovery and continued impacts of drought.

## CIVIL SOCIETY, INGOS AND UN

- Ensure effective coordination amongst all actors to ensure integrated and consistent approaches to gender and protection issues, including regional-level coordination, such as in Sool and Sanaag.

## RESEARCH BEHIND THE BRIEFING NOTE

This briefing note is a synthesis of two research pieces: a protection assessment and a rapid gender assessment, both completed in late 2018, focusing on Sool and Sanaag, where Oxfam's humanitarian response is delivered. Both assessments involved a desk review, focus group discussions and key informant interviews, including 320 household interviews for the gender assessment and 195 for the protection assessment. Findings are specific to Sool and Sanaag, but likely have broader applicability across Somaliland, due to cultural similarities and comparable drought impacts.

